



APR 11 2000

March 29, 2000

Department of the Army  
Walla Walla District Corps of Engineers  
201 North Third Avenue  
Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876

Attention: Lower Snake River Study

Dear Sir or Madam:

We appreciate the work that has been put into recent salmon recovery studies. It's important to tackle the salmon issue from a basin-wide, multi-species perspective and to seek solutions that will provide benefits to the salmon population. But there is still much work to do and much to be considered before a recovery plan should be finalized. The decisions made over the next few months will have a lifetime effect on the people in the Pacific Northwest.

We must approach the problem scientifically as well as with common sense, making sure we consider all of the ramifications, especially to people. The focus on options must be broader than hydro. The impact of dam removal is significant to this region in many, many ways and is far from perfect, nor a proven solution to save salmon.

Much of the debate has focused on our hydro system, ignoring the benefits it brings to the region and also ignoring the fact that salmon mortality is a result of many factors all along the salmon lifecycle.

The dams are part of a much larger economic system that provides navigation, low-cost clean electricity, irrigation as well as revenue to help restore salmon.

The removal of dams will provide new environmental problems that future generations will have to tackle. The loss of clean and renewable energy would have to be replaced by burning fossil fuels, and transportation by river will have to be replaced with rail and trucks. In addition, the economic impact of dam removal would be tremendous from lost jobs and the devastating impact on agriculture.

The Caucus is correct in the assessment that better coordination is needed among the federal agencies across the four H's to maximize the benefits of any federal spending and actions. A common set of priorities for funding and decision-making on implementation actions is needed within each H.

A comprehensive recovery approach guided by clear goals and priorities is what the region needs to restore and protect salmon. All aspects of habitat, hatcheries, harvest, and hydro have to be a part of the final plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Graves  
President of the Commission  
Benton PUD

RGG:vla